

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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AMEMBASSY DAKAR PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MADRID IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY

AMCONSUL CASABLANCA PRIORITY

AMCONSUL TANGIER PRIORITY

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T RABAT 5404

EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - E O TAGS AND SUBJ LINES

DEPARTMENT PASS PRIORITY USCINCEUR, CINCUSNAVEUR, FOSIF ROTA,
COMSIXTHFLT

USCINCEUR AND CINCUSNAVEUR ALSO FOR POLADS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PBOR, MO, SP, SS

SUBJECT: MOROCAN MARCH PAUSING WHILE TALKS WITH SPAIN CONTINUE

1. SUMMARY. COOPERATION MINISTER MOHAMED BENHIMA, THE
RANKING MOROCCAN OFFICIAL IN RABAT, INDICATES KING AND JUAN
CARLOS REMAIN IN CLOSE CONTACT AND THAT THEIR EARLIER UNDERSTANDING
ON MODALITIES OF MARCH REMAINS IN EFFECT. MOROCCANS ARE
PAUSING FOR 24 HOURS TO PERMIT BILATERAL DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS TO GO

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FORWARD. AT SAME TIME, GOM OPEN TO UN INVOLVEMENT AS

UMBRELLA FOR ARRANGEMENTS WHICH MIGHT BE AGREED UPON WITH SPAIN. BENHIMA ALSO ASKED THAT UNSC TAKE NO FURTHER POSITIONS ALONG LINES OF RECENT RESOLUTIONS. GOM CONSIDERS ALGERIA, WHICH CLOSED FRONTIER MORNING OF NOVEMBER 7, TO BE OUT OF NEGOTIATING PICTURE AND MOROCCO FACING UP TO POSSIBILITY OF INDIRECT OR DIRECT ALGERIAN MILITARY INTERVENTION, BUT MOROCCO WOULD NOT TAKE FIRST STEP TOWARD WAR, ACCORDING TO BENHIMA. I USED OUR MEETING TO REITERATE NEED FOR RESTRAINT AND UNDERSTANDING OF SPANISH PROBLEMS IN PRESENT INTERNAL TRANSITION AND FOR SUFFICIENT TIME TO BE ALLOWED FOR DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS TO BEAR FRUIT. END SUMMARY

2. I CALLED ON COOPERATION MINISTER MOHAMED BENHIMA MORNING NOVEMBER 7 TO GET UPDATE ON SAHARA. BENHIMA IS HIGHEST OFFICIAL PRESENT IN RABAT AND IS IN EFFECT ACTING AS BOTH PRIME MINISTER AND FOREIGN MINISTER WHILE THE LATTER ARE PARTICIPATING IN MARCH.

3. STRESSING I WAS NOT ACTING UNDER INSTRUCTIONS, I NOTED THAT IN VIEW OF CURRENT TENSIONS AND ABSENCE OF KING AND MOST OF GOVERNMENT FROM RABAT, IT WAS ESSENTIAL FOR USG TO BE AS FULLY INFORMED AS POSSIBLE. I REMINDED BENHIMA OF OUR CONSISTENT HOPE THAT SAHARA DISPUTE COULD BE RESOLVED PEACEFULLY AMONG PARTIES AND RECALLED RECENT MESSAGES FROM SECRETARY TO KING COUNSELING PRUDENCE. I ALSO ALLUDED TO FACT THAT BOUMEDIENNE HAD CALLED IN AMBASSADORS OF SECURITY COUNCIL MEMBER STATES AND HAD SPOKEN IN GRAVE MANNER WHICH HAD RAISED CONCERN. I SAID IT SEEMED TO ME PRINCE JUAN CARLOS AND KING BOTH HAD STRONG INTEREST IN AVOIDING WEAKENING ONE ANOTHER. I URGED THAT MOROCCO NOT UNDERESTIMATE DIFFICULTIES FACED BY JUAN CARLOS IN ASSUMING BURDENS OF STATE AND EXPRESSED BY UNDERSTANDING THAT SPANISH POSITION WAS ONE OF SEEKING AN ACCOMMODATION WITH MOROCCO WHICH WOULD IN EFFECT GO FAR TO SATISFY MOROCCAN SUBSTANTIVE REQUIREMENTS BUT AT SAME TIME PRESERVE A FORM WHICH WOULD TAKE INTO ACCOUNT SPANISH HONOR AND NOT WEAKEN JUAN CARLOS. I EXPRESSED PERSONAL HOPE THAT IDEA OF UN FORMULA WOULD NOT BE VIEWED BY GOM FROM OVERLY LEGALISTIC POINT OF VIEW BUT INSTEAD BE SEEN AS A MEANS TO ACHIEVE A COMMON AIM.

4. IN RESPONSE, BENHIMA STATED THAT ALGERIA HAD NOW TAKEN A POSITION FROM WHICH "IT CANNOT RETREAT." ALGERIA HAD CLOSED BORDER WITH MOROCCO MORNING NOVEMBER 7 MOROCCANS WELL
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AWARE THAT ALGERIA BETTER ARMED, HE CONTINUED, AND MOROCCO WOULD NOT TAKE FIRST STEP TOWARD WAR. IF ALGERIANS DECIDED TO ATTACK, THEY COULD DO SO IN TWO WAYS: A) BY STRENGTHENING F POLISARIO, POSSIBLY EVEN INTRODUCING ALGERIAN REGULARS IN DISGUISE INTO F POLISARIO'S RANKS. THIS, MOROCCO COULD HANDLE; OR B) BY INVADING IN A DECLARED OR UNDECLARED WAR, IN WHICH CASE MOROCCO WOULD DEFEND ITSELF AS BEST IT COULD. ALGERIA, HOWEVER, SHOULD NOT THINK DESERT WARS A SIMPLE MATTER. ALGERIA'S ACTION,

BENHIMA ASSERTED, HAD NOW PRECLUDED ALGERIAN PARTICIPATION IN SETTLEMENT OF SAHARA ISSUE.

5. REGARDING UN INVOLVEMENT, MOROCCO READY TO ENTER INTO A UN ARRANGEMENT, PROVIDED SECURITY COUNCIL TAKES NO FURTHER POSITIONS ALONG LINES OF NOVEMBER 6 OR PREVIOUS RESOLUTIONS, BENHIMA WENT ON TO STATE. APPROACH SHOULD BE FOR MOROCCO AND SPAIN TO COME TO TERMS AND THEN AT PROPER MOMENT UN COULD PROVIDE AN UMBRELLA. MOROCCO DID NOT WANT UN ROLE SUCH AS THAT PLAYED BY UN IN PALESTINIAN PROBLEM, HE SAID.

6. KING AND JUAN CARLOS REMAINING IN CLOSE CONTACT, BENHIMA CONTINUED, AND FORMULA PREVIOUSLY AGREED UPON CONCERNING MODALITIES OF MARCH STILL IN EFFECT. MOROCCO CONCERNED, HOWEVER, OVER OBVIOUS CONFUSION IN MADRID. SPANISH AMB HAD TELEPHONED BENHIMA EVENING NOVEMBER 6 TO SAY IT SEEMED THAT KING AND JUAN CARLOS HAD ARRANGED MATTERS; SHORTLY THEREAFTER, HOWEVER, SPANISH UN REP HAD SPOKEN A "DIFFERENT LANGUAGE". I COMMENTED THAT IN LIGHT OF INEVITABLE CONFUSION IN PRESENT TRANSITIONAL PERIOD IN SPAIN, PROBLEMS OF JUAN CARLOS NEEDED TO BE TAKEN INTO FULL ACCOUNT. IF MARCH CONTINUED, SPANISH CHOICES WOULD NECESSARILY BE LIMITED, I OBSERVED. "MARCH CONTINUES," BENHIMA UNDERLINED, BUT IT WOULD NOT ADVANCE FOR 24 HOURS."

7. I ASKED WHETHER ANY THIRD PARTIES, SUCH AS SAUDIS, PLAYING A MEDIATORY ROLE. BENHIMA STATED THAT SPAIN HAD REFUSED MEDIATION BY THIRD PARTIES, BUT INSTEAD WANTED TO SETTLE DIRECTLY WITH MOROCCO.

8. COMMENT: WE ARE MILDLY ENCOURAGED BY THIS CONFIRMATION THAT GOM BRIEFLY HOLDING BACK ITS MARCH TO PROVIDE MORE TIME FOR TALKS WITH SPAIN. MOROCCAN AND SPANISH POSITIONS MAY BE COMING A BIT CLOSER TOGETHER, INASMUCH AS BENHIMA DID NOT
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TOTALLY DISMISS IDEA OF UN FORMULA. KING SEEMS TO BE TRYING TO TURN TOUGH ALGERIAN STAND TO HIS OWN ADVANTAGE IN HIS EFFORT TO EXCLUDE ALGERIA COMPLETELY FROM ANY ROLE IN SAHARA SETTLEMENT.
NEUMANN

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED ABOVE ADDRESSEES.

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